



SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY
The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

NEW TESTAMENT 2

4.1 The Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation

David Moseley, Ph.D.

At last...after two years and four semesters of study...we have arrived at the end of the Bible with the most notorious book of the Bible - Revelation! It's an appropriate enough terminus to fully stretch all your hermeneutical skills. The Book of Revelation affirms Christianity's original hope for an immediate transformation of the world; and assures the faithful that God's pre-arranged plan—including the destruction of evil and the advent of Christ's universal reign—is about to be accomplished. The book presents an *apokalypsis* (Greek: "unveiling" / "revelation") of unseen realities, both in heaven as it is now...and on earth as it will be in the future. Placing government oppression and Christian suffering in a cosmic perspective, Revelation conveys its message of hope for believers in the cryptic language of metaphor and symbol. The eternal arguments about the proper meaning and interpretation of the Revelation oscillates between the two central poles of Scriptural study – fundamentalist literalism and historical-critical qualification. Written by John of Patmos, a persecuted Church leader confined to a Roman penal colony during the late 1st Century C.E., the message of the text modulates between present crisis and future resolution – between immediate history and eschatological consummation. It is also a work of Theodicy: *Given the reality of pain and suffering in the world, why should we believe that God exists, and that God is ultimately in control...and that God is Good and Loving?*

Assignment #12 for Class on Saturday 13th April 2019

Reading

Please read through the Book of Revelation. I suggest reading the Introduction to Revelation in your Oxford Annotated NRSV Bible beforehand; and then reading through the Scriptural text. Revelation is the densest and most layered text in the Bible, and you will need to pause frequently as you read it through, and constantly refer to the annotations in your NRSV to help with clarification and interpretation. Once you get overwhelmed (and you will), take a break...and then return to the book when your head has cleared and you can read again with a fresh outlook. Always be mindful of how this text would have been heard and experienced, and what this book would have meant, to its original audience in persecuted churches in West Asia Minor. *Would it have been just as obscure and enigmatic to them back then as it is to you today?*

Thinking & Responding

For this week's Response Paper, I'd like you to consider the understanding of "History" in Revelation – the *Past*, the *Present*, and the *Future*...of God's dealings with Humanity, and Humanity's Dealings with God and each other. What does Revelation mean to us today compared to what it meant to the Christian community when it was written? Please write your Response of approximately 600-700 words in total on this subject (12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margin, with your name at the top of the paper). Please bring your paper to class, and come ready to discuss these issues.